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June 24, 2020

City Planning Commission
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

[Via Email cpc@lacity.org]

RE: CPC-2018-4660-CA
Restaurant Beverage Program
Letter of Support

Honorable Commissioners:

The Melrose Arts District is managed by the Melrose Avenue Business Improvement District "BID", a five-year property based district formed by a vote of the commercial property owners that assess themselves for its cost of operation. Some 186 properties are included.

The Melrose BID proactively works to revitalize and enhance the commercial vitality of Melrose Avenue between Highland and Fairfax Avenues through the following improvements and activities: ambassador, security, and parking services; landscape, sanitation, and beautification services; marketing and promotions; new business attraction; and policy advocacy on behalf of its stakeholders.

On June 12, 2020, the Melrose BID Board voted unanimously to submit a letter in support of CPC 2018-4660-CA to create the Restaurant Beverage Program "RBP" administrative approval process for qualifying sit-down restaurants.

There are challenges impacting vacancy rates and viability along Melrose Boulevard that would be mitigated by regulatory streamlining in alcohol sales permits issued by the City of Los Angeles Planning Department. Our Boulevard is characterized by smaller sized tenant spaces and operators that are unique, independent and alternative. As such, they are more impacted by the long delays and significant costs associated with the current Conditional Use Permit discretionary approval process.

The COVID-19 pandemic emergency as well as the civic protests and vandalism following the death of George Floyd exacerbated challenges in our neighborhood right when our businesses were starting to reopen.

As stated, the Melrose BID property owners are actively engaged in safety, security and beautification. We also work closely with area stakeholders including Neighborhood Councils and residents. As each

individual Conditional Use Permit currently requires a public hearing and applicants have engaged in outreach, both the Zoning Administrator and Neighborhood Councils have developed standardized conditions of approval that mitigate and prevent known potential impacts of restaurant alcohol sales. We see these conditions reflected in the staff report recommendations.

The RBP also provides mechanisms to ensure restaurant operators are aware of conditions of operation, provide documentation of compliance, will receive inspections and are subject to further discretionary review with public hearings should impacts occur. We see these provisions as effective safeguards to the community and balance the critical need for streamlining.

We also recommend two 12.22 A 34 code language modifications:

Eligibility Condition (a) (3) – MODIFY

Replace: “Restaurant having between a minimum of 20 patron seats and a maximum of 150 patron seats, including any outdoor seating.”

With: “Restaurant having between a minimum of 20 patron seats and a maximum of 199 patron seats, including any outdoor seating.”

- **WHY:** A restaurant under 200 seats requesting alcohol sales threshold has been a long established standard for small restaurants as not having a history of significant impacts on the community. The reduction to 150 seats is arbitrary and impactful to small restaurants exceeding 150 seats.

Development Standards and Operations Condition (b) (13) - MODIFY

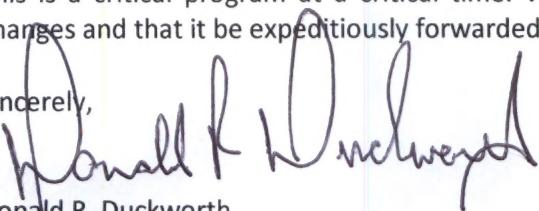
Replace: “No more than 50% of the entire restaurant may be closed to the public for private events.”

With: “The restaurant may be closed to the public for private events, but the use of outside promoters is prohibited.”

- **WHY:** Our restaurants are critical points of connection for the community and are relatively small. A 50% threshold unfairly impacts revenue prospects for smaller restaurants when potential impacts are already addressed by other conditions and a restriction against outside promoters.

This is a critical program at a critical time. We respectfully you approve this item with the 2 minor changes and that it be expeditiously forwarded to the City Council for adoption.

Sincerely,



Donald R. Duckworth
Executive Director